

**City of Eau Claire
Plan Commission Minutes**

Meeting of April 20, 2015

City Hall, Council Chambers

7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Messrs. Weld, Pederson, Granlund, Seymour, Hibbard, Radabaugh
Ms. Mitchell, Ms. Ebert

Staff Present: Messrs. Tufte, Noel, Ivory, Schatz, Genskow

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Weld.

1. **SITE PLAN (SP-1513) – Kurz Industrial Solutions, Gateway Industrial Park**

Mr. Tufte presented a request to approve a site plan for Kurz Industrial Solutions. The new building would be located on a vacant 4.5 acre I-1P lot on the southeast corner of CTH "T" and Fortune Drive within the Gateway Industrial Park. The site plan notes future areas of expansion and parking for 34 stalls. The easterly driveway for truck turn movements is larger than 30 feet and needs commission approval. A 100-foot setback from CTH "T" is required and 50 feet of this is to be retained by the Gateway Development Corporation for future road widening improvements. Proposed street trees will need to be moved backed on the site plan.

Tom Lee with Kurz Industrial Solutions stated the proposed parking is going to be high with only eight employees planned. There is not going to be much traffic with vendors, trucks, and walk-in appointments. Ronald Wolf with McMahon Engineers and Architects submitted a letter that states Kurz are in agreement with the staff report conditions and will make site plan revisions.

Mr. Granlund moved to approve the site plan subject to conditions of the staff report.
Mr. Hibbard seconded and the motion carried.

2. **EXCESS PROPERTY – 2728 Davey Street**

Mr. Schatz presented a request to declare a property owned by the City of Eau Claire as excess land at 2728 Davey Street. The 39,000 square foot building, owned since 1992, is no longer needed since the long-term tenant has retired and sold the business. There is a shortage of industrial buildings in the city and so it is a good time to sell it.

Ms. Mitchell moved to recommend approval of the declaration of excess property. Ms. Ebert seconded and the motion carried.

3. **DISCUSSION/DIRECTION**

A. Comprehensive Plan Update

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map (First Avenue & Lake Street)

Mr. Tufte presented a letter from Eau Claire County. They have concerns with the Plan Commission's change of residential boundary for the county courthouse campus. The area

in question is the homes along First Avenue and Lake Street. The Plan Commission's draft Comprehensive Plan map shows the homes remaining along Lake Street and First Avenue.

Helene Smiar, 320 Broadway Street and President of the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Association, stated the new neighborhood plan shows that the homes along First Avenue and Lake Street should be kept. This is important because when one enters the neighborhood from the east it makes the neighborhood appear not divided by the courthouse campus. Taking the homes would have a negative visual appeal. There is concern also with the continued loss of owner-occupied homes and losing these homes would be another negative impact. She quoted the draft neighborhood chapter in the Comprehensive Plan for the city to take a more proactive approach on preserving and improving neighborhoods. The City's plans are a source of hope for the neighborhood the County should get on board. She stated that it would be in the County's best interest to leave the homes since there has been millions of dollars invested in the neighborhood. The homes in question are in good shape, and thus they should be saved.

Jeff DeGrave, 133 Lake Street, stated he lives across the street from the homes in question. He said the First Avenue and Lake Street intersection will be reconstructed this summer and if the houses are removed, the area could eventually become a stormwater facility furthering the loss of neighborhood identity. He has concerns about FEMA flood insurance being costly and if the homes are actually in the floodplain now that the courthouse raised the parking lot elevation.

Jim Dunning, 164 Wold Court and a County Board Supervisor, stated the homes along Lake Street and First Avenue should be allowed to be removed for future courthouse campus expansion. There are not, at this time, any proposed projects but the County would like the area for possible building expansions and parking. The County owns one home in the area of question. Mr. Dunning stated the courthouse property is not in the floodplain now and sewers are not used in the city for flooding because it would create overflows.

Ken Ziehr, 223 Hudson Street, had concerns with more parking, hardscape and stormwater improvements in the immediate area and homes taken off the tax rolls. He suggested that neighborhood church parking agreements be worked out such as the County did during expansion. The idea might help churches stay in their locations as they are important to the neighborhood. He urged the County to consider this flexible strategy.

Dwight Stevenson, 550 Grand Avenue, stated from his apartment he sees the homes from across the river and is concerned with their unattractive appearance. The homes should be removed. The County could acquire homes on the west side of their campus for future needs.

Frank Draxler, 2139 Walnut Road and the Eau Claire City-County Purchasing Director, stated the County could buy the homes in the next 15 years. There is no plan for building right now but there is a shortage in parking. They rent parking from one church and may consider others, but many County clients desire nearby parking.

Nick Smiar, 320 Broadway and a County Board Supervisor, stated the current housing arrangement is how the neighborhood should be maintained. This is so because of the previous four-story building expansion project where the County made concessions to keep

the housing. The homes however continue to become dilapidated based off the perception that the County will eventually buy them. The City should take a strong role in preserving this entrance into the neighborhood.

Analisa DeGrave, 133 Lake Street, serves on the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Association and was on the steering committee for the neighborhood plan. She stated her family wanted to live in this area because it is close to downtown, bike trails and the rivers. She is hopeful for the neighborhood's future due to its close downtown proximity. The neighborhood plan shows that all homes on both streets should remain instead of future County courthouse expansion. She is concerned about flooding if more parking is built. She asked the City to help advance the 15 percent of owner-occupied voices in the neighborhood.

Mr. Genskow stated the floodplain issue is because of upstream volume. Any new development would have to meet run-off release rates. There are some water quality improvements in the new courthouse campus expansion. The grading elevation had to be raised for the courthouse parking and building. Thus, flooding would actually now come through Owen Park and down Second Avenue.

The commission provided direction. Mr. Hibbard was concerned with adding more impervious surfaces if the County created more parking. This may also cause more difficulties to the homes in the floodplain.

Ms. Mitchell stated because the County does not have any expansion plans within the next ten years, the draft Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map should stay as is and can be revisited when updated again in ten years. The City in the meanwhile should help preserve the homes.

Additionally, if the County had needs sooner, the current zoning for the homes would have to be changed no matter what the Comprehensive Plan map says.

Mr. Granlund stated the boundary line is appropriate with the courthouse and the homes. It strikes a good balance of uses and appearance entering the neighborhood. Mr. Weld agreed.

Mr. Hibbard moved to approve that the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map for the homes along First Avenue and Lake Street near the County courthouse remain as residential designation. Seconded by Mr. Seymour and the motion carried.

Sustainability Chapter Update

Mr. Tufte shared the recommendations provided by the City's Advisory Commission on Sustainability (ACS). A number of them are already covered by the City and for a few, slight text adjustments were made in the Natural Resource chapter (for example, the policy on stormwater management best practices). He mentioned the Sustainability Chapter is unique and should remain as a separate document to allow for greater flexibility when it comes to specific project consideration.

The commission provided feedback that the liquid mercury policy should not be in the comprehensive plan but could be addressed in the ACS' workplan, and that the text of the remaining six recommendations should be more readable. The property assessed clean energy policy should also capture other energy efficiency type programs that have merit to consider.

Downtown & Economic Development chapters' Implementation Plans.

Mr. Tufte went through item by item the Downtown and Economic Development chapters' Implementation Plans.

Ms. Mitchell stated the Downtown Parking Study is too ambitious for 2016 and the Confluence Project amphitheater should be called a plaza instead.

Mr. Pederson stated the I-94/Cameron Street interchange will be a hard sell with the Federal Government, but the City should plan for it.

Mr. Weld was concerned with buyer/seller fear with the interchange and that people get confused by its long term status.

Mr. Genskow stated the Metropolitan Planning Commission shows the interchange on their long range planning maps and an outlot is owned by the City already.

B. Code Compliance Item

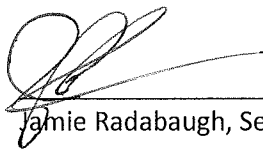
Mr. Weld stated the City should plan to hire a full-time code enforcement officer to help improve the housing stock. He on behalf of the commission gave condolences to Dave Duax's family on his recent passing. Mr. Duax served on the City Council and Plan Commission for many years.

C. Future Agenda Items

None.

D. Additions or Corrections to Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of April 6, 2015 were approved.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JR' or similar, with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jamie Radabaugh, Secretary